E 475
.51
.B36
Copy 1

Class E475

Book .51

B36

PR 30 1907

A Paper read before

The United Service Club

Philadelphia Penna

Wednesday March 6 1889

By JAMES BEALE late Private 12th Mass Vol Infy

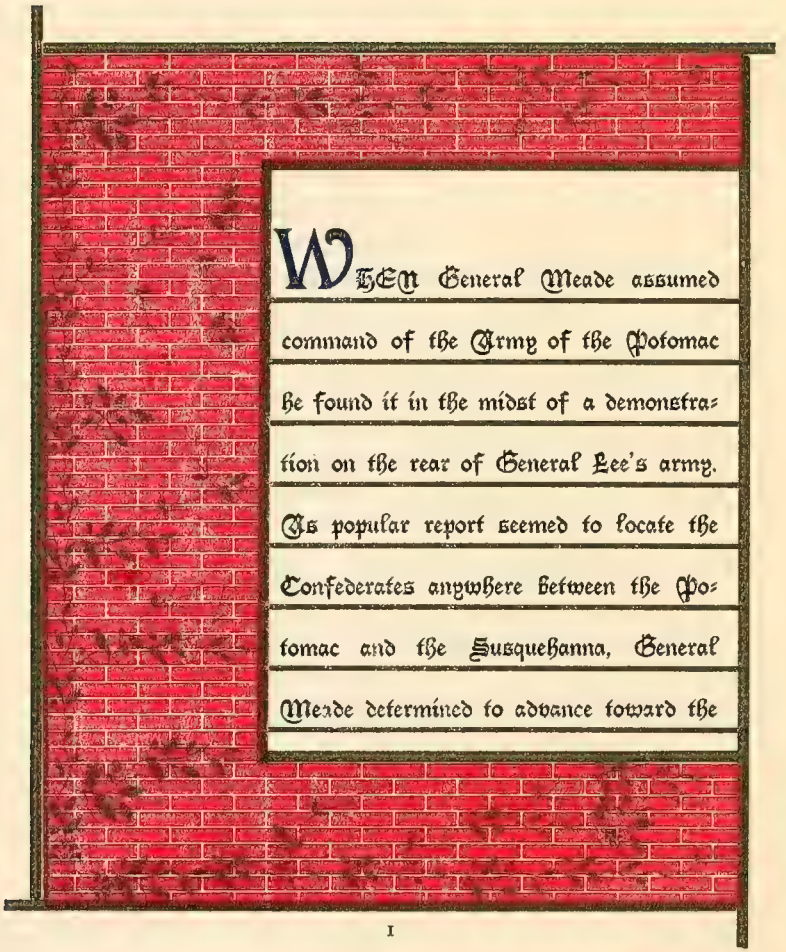
E475
.51
.B36

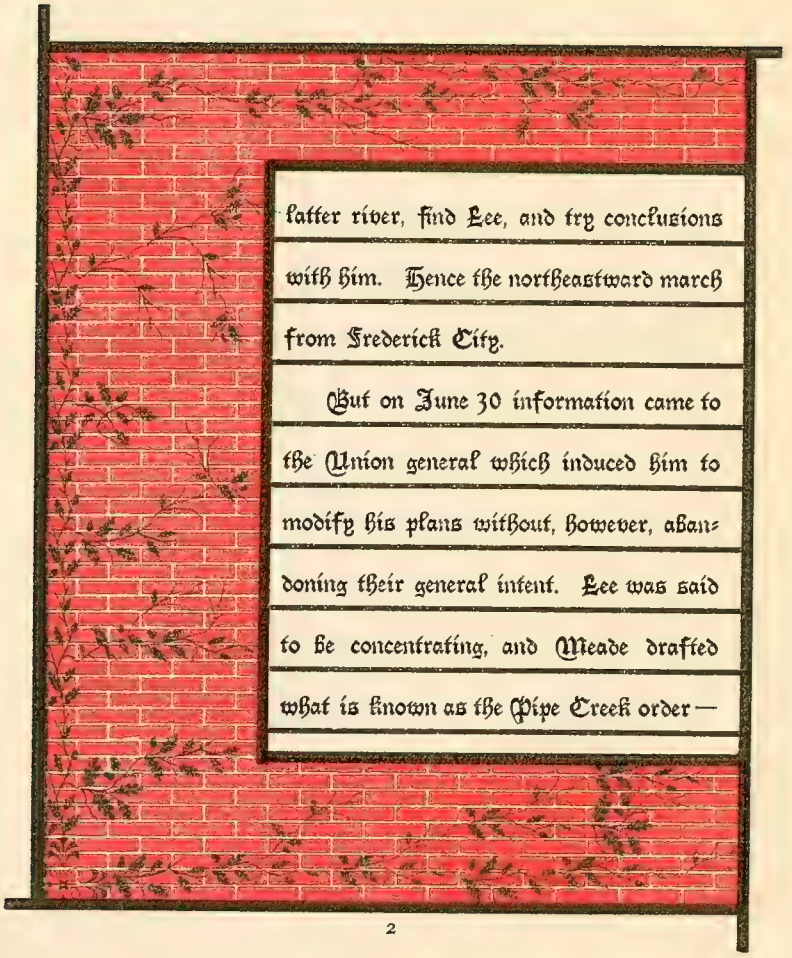
"Here pitch our battle; hence we will not budge."

King Henry VI, Part III, Act v, Scene iv.

From Marsh Run

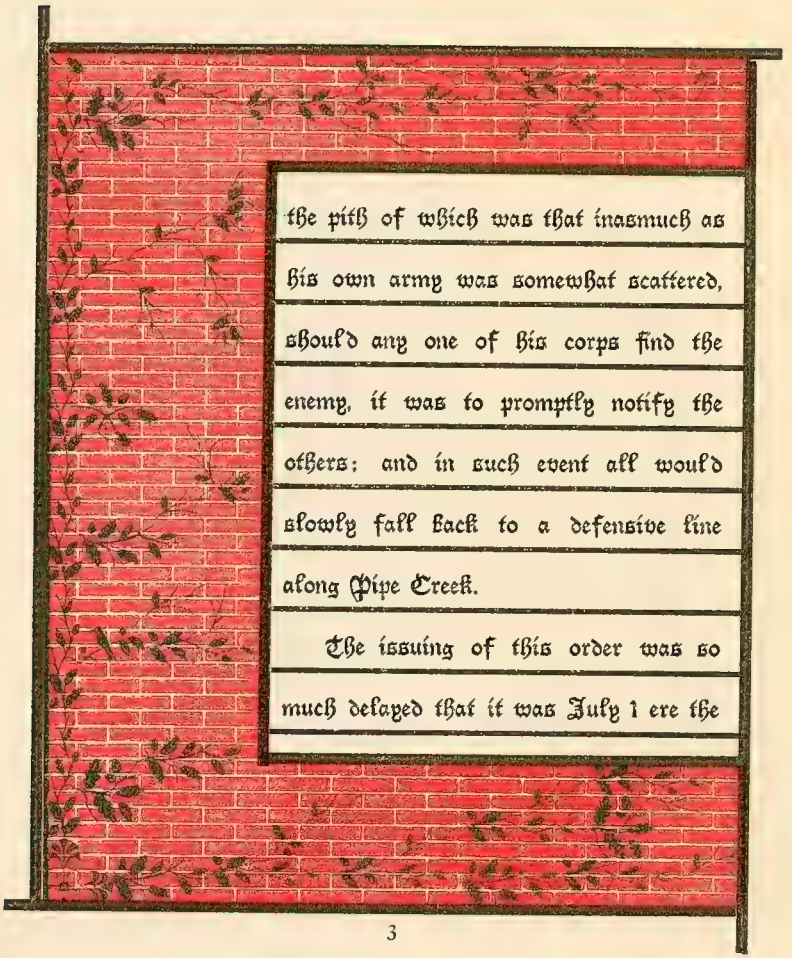
to Seminary Ridge


WHEN General Meade assumed
command of the Army of the Potomac
he found it in the midst of a demonstra-
tion on the rear of General Lee's army.
As popular report seemed to locate the
Confederates anywhere between the Po-
tomac and the Susquehanna, General
Meade determined to advance toward the



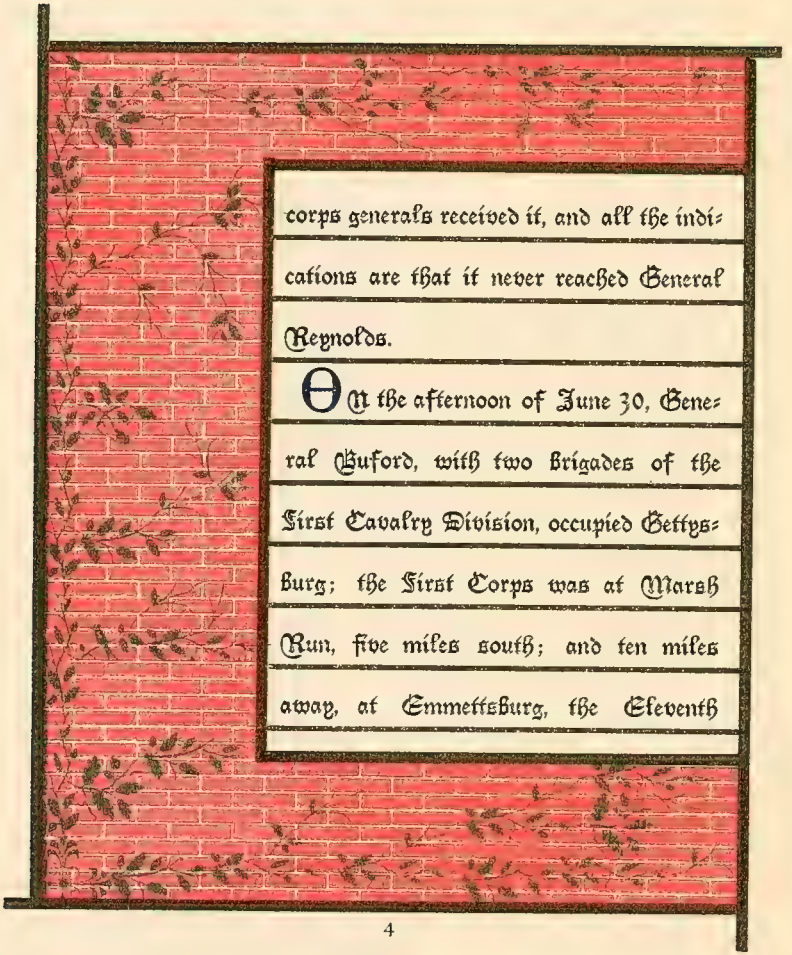
latter river, find Lee, and try conclusions with him. Hence the northeastward march from Frederick City.

But on June 30 information came to the Union general which induced him to modify his plans without, however, abandoning their general intent. Lee was said to be concentrating, and Meade drafted what is known as the Pipe Creek order—



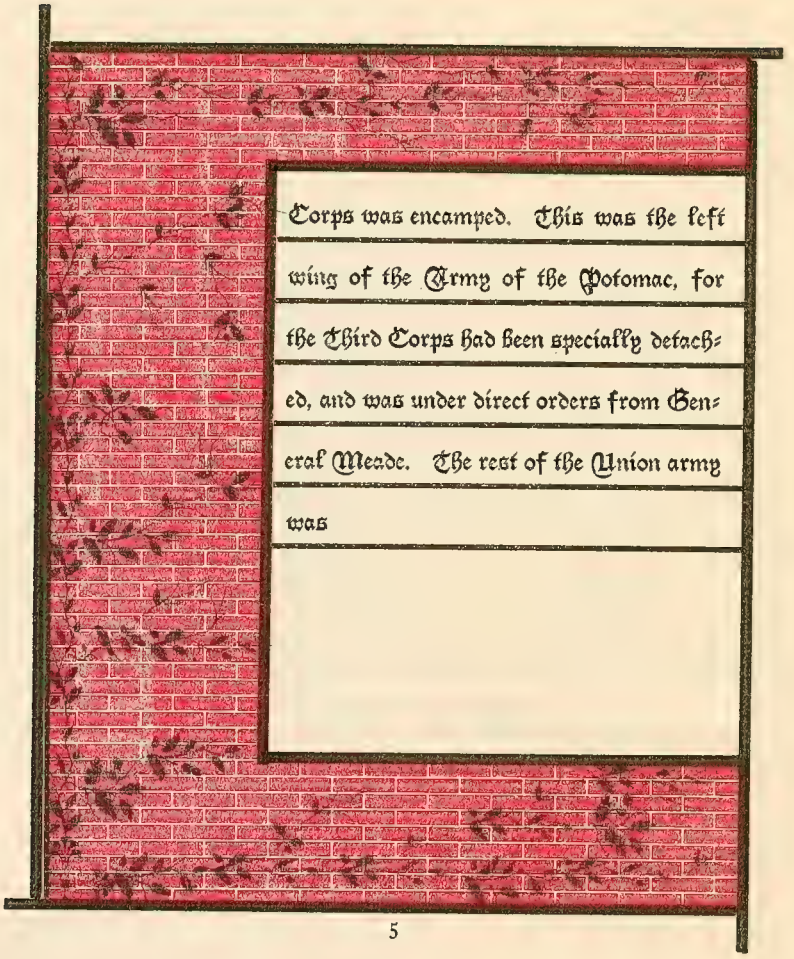
the pith of which was that inasmuch as his own army was somewhat scattered, should any one of his corps find the enemy, it was to promptly notify the others; and in such event all would slowly fall back to a defensive line along Pipe Creek.

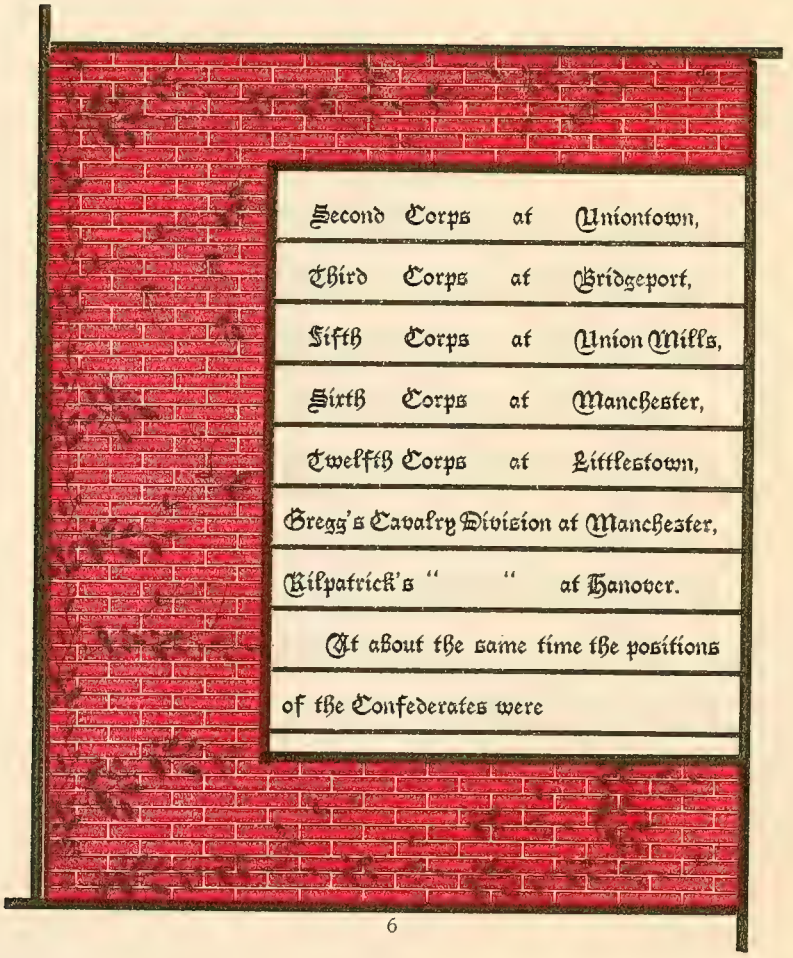
The issuing of this order was so much delayed that it was July 1 ere the

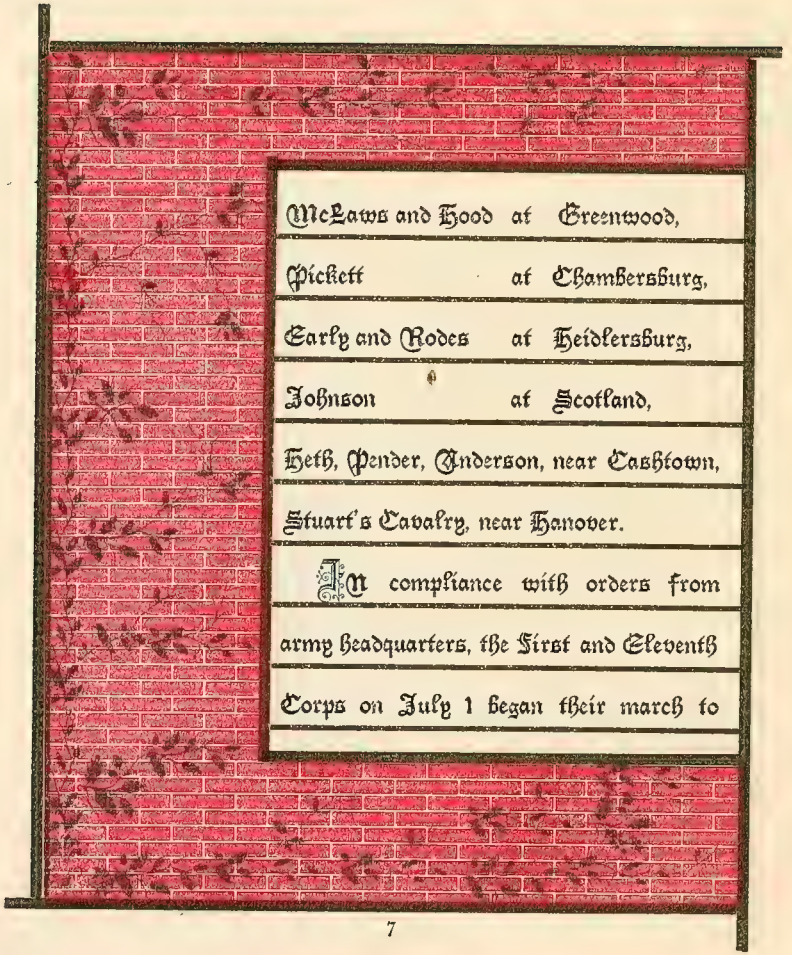


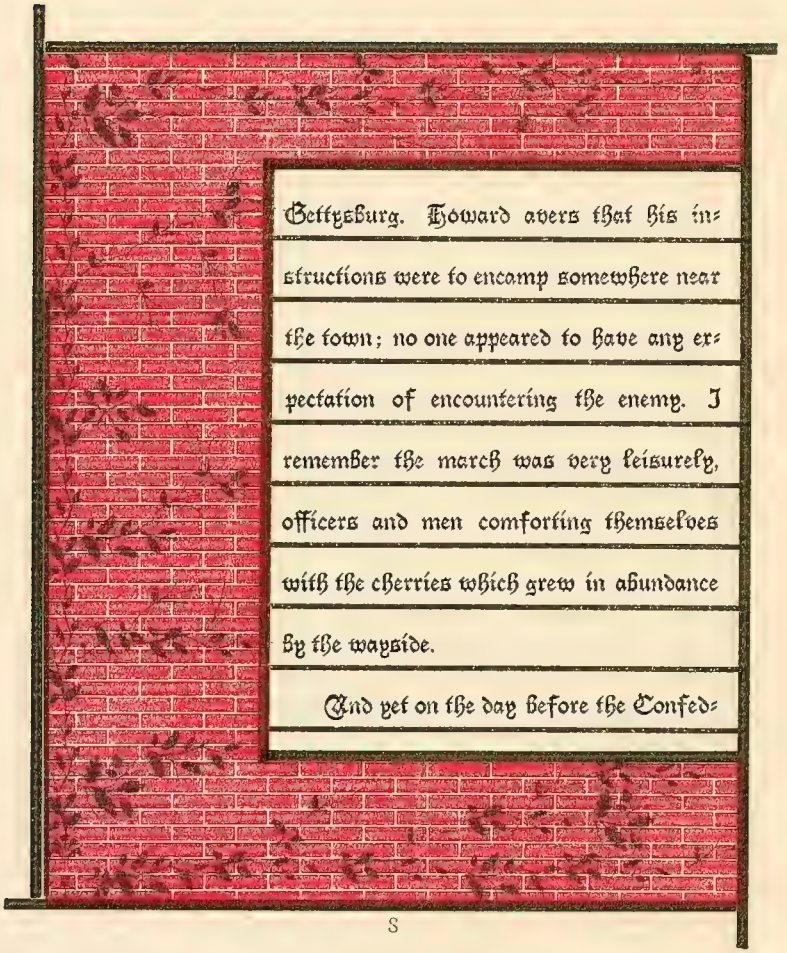
corps generals received it, and all the indi-
cations are that it never reached General
Reynolds.

On the afternoon of June 30, Gene-
ral Buford, with two brigades of the
First Cavalry Division, occupied Gettys-
burg; the First Corps was at Marsh
Run, five miles south; and ten miles
away, at Emmettsburg, the Eleventh


Corps was encamped. This was the left
wing of the Army of the Potomac, for
the Third Corps had been specially detach-
ed, and was under direct orders from Gen-
eral Meade. The rest of the Union army
was

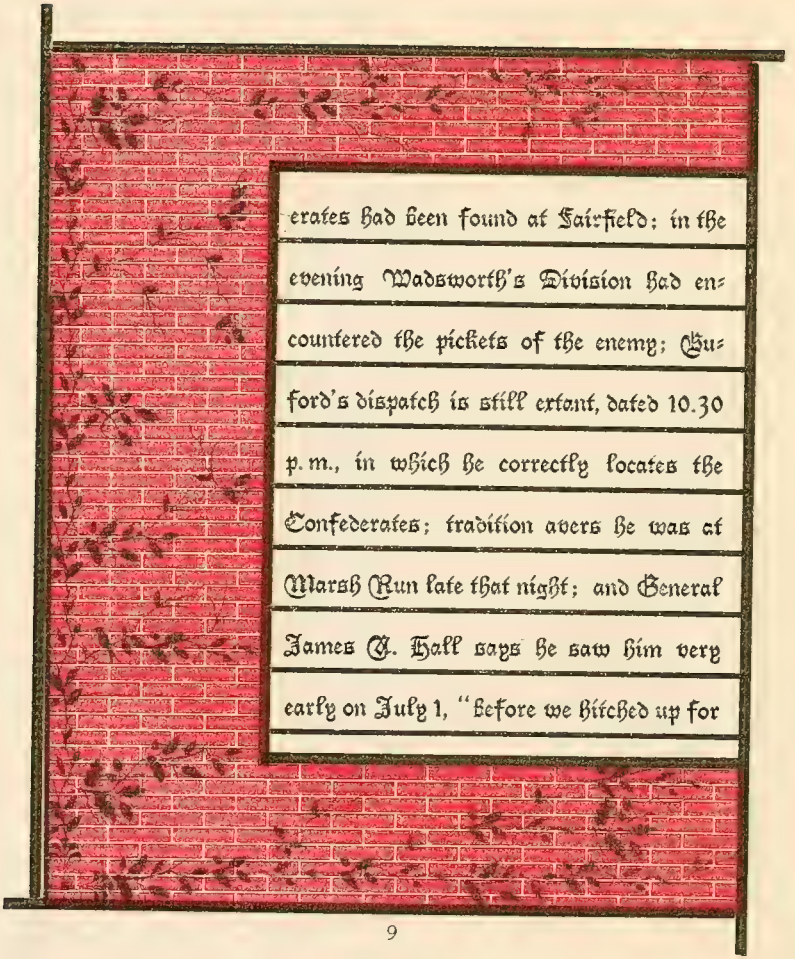

Second Corps at Uniontown,
Third Corps at Bridgeport,
Fifth Corps at Union Mills,
Sixth Corps at Manchester,
Twelfth Corps at Littlestown,
Gregg's Cavalry Division at Manchester,
Kilpatrick's " " at Hanover.
At about the same time the positions
of the Confederates were

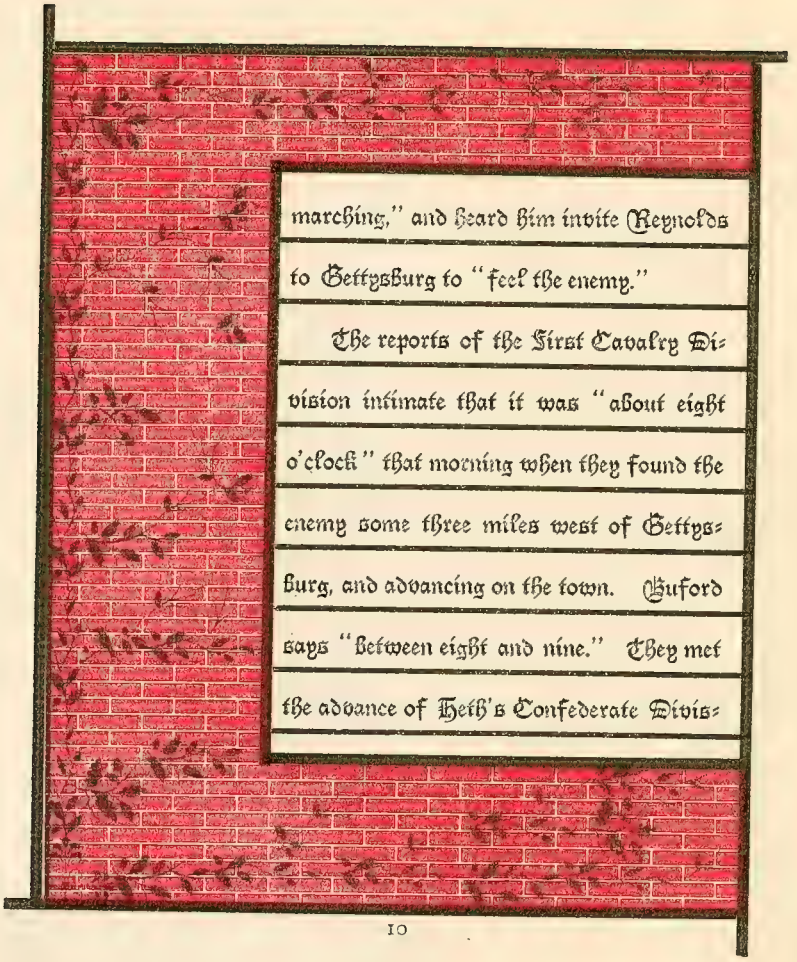

McLaws and Hood at Greenwood,
Pickett at Chambersburg,
Early and Rodes at Heidlersburg,
Johnson at Scotland,
Heth, Pender, Anderson, near Cashtown,
Stuart's Cavalry, near Hanover.
In compliance with orders from
army headquarters, the First and Eleventh
Corps on July 1 began their march to



Gettysburg. Howard avers that his in-
structions were to encamp somewhere near
the town; no one appeared to have any ex-
pectation of encountering the enemy. I
remember the march was very leisurely,
officers and men comforting themselves
with the cherries which grew in abundance
by the wayside.

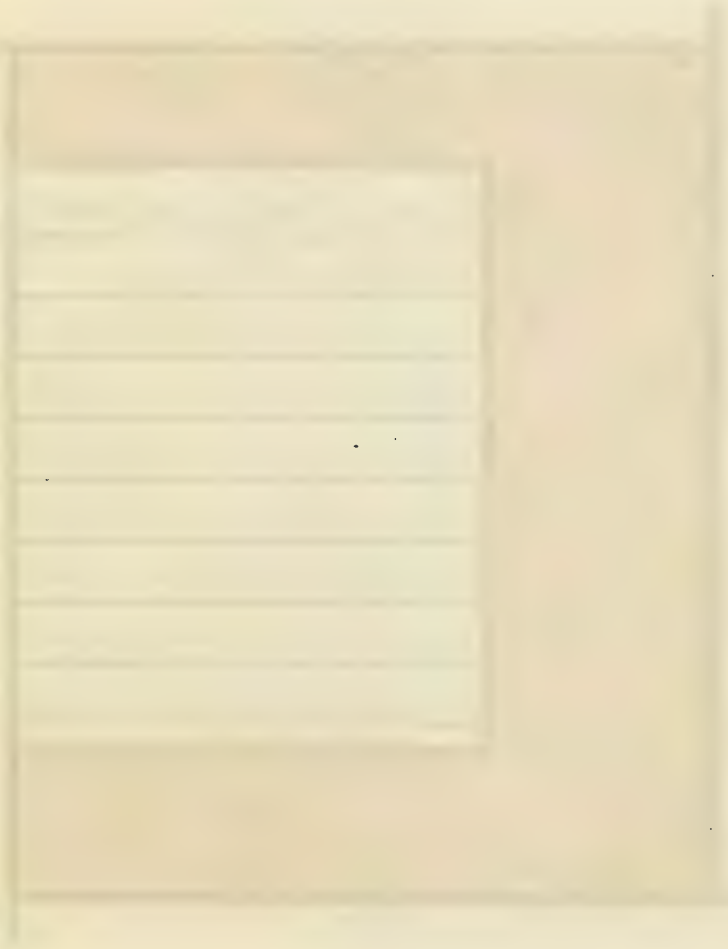
And yet on the day before the Confed-

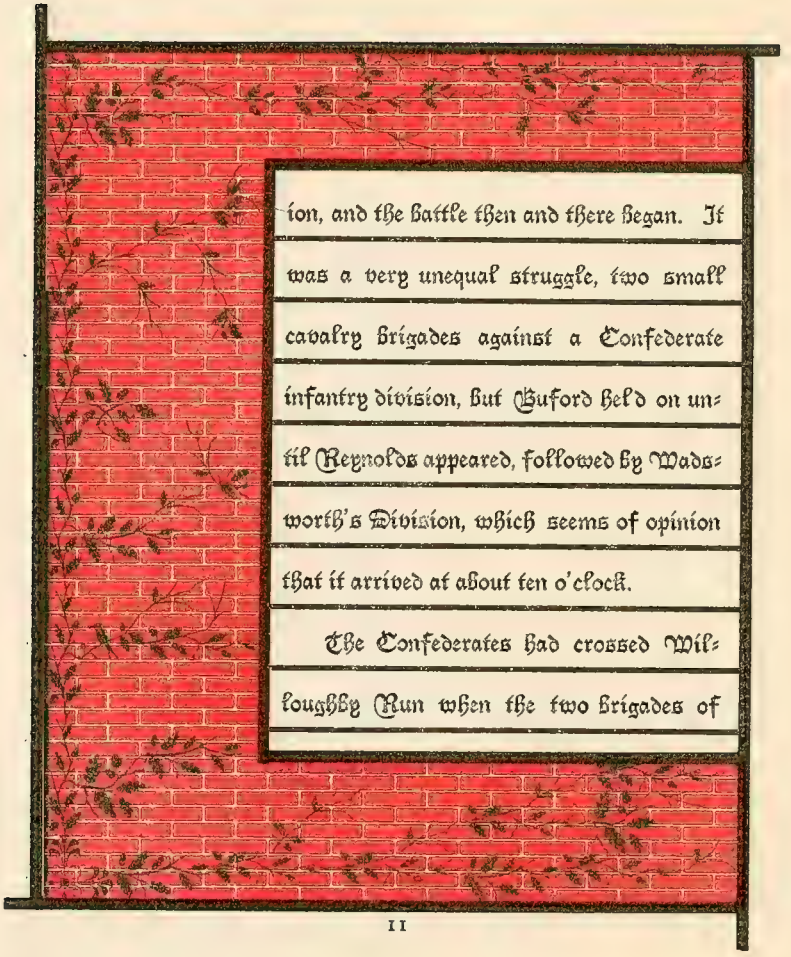

erates had been found at Fairfield; in the
evening Wadsworth's Division had en-
countered the pickets of the enemy; Bu-
ford's dispatch is still extant, dated 10.30
p. m., in which he correctly locates the
Confederates; tradition avers he was at
Marsh Run late that night; and General
James A. Hall says he saw him very
early on July 1, "before we hitched up for



marching," and heard him invite Reynolds to Gettysburg to "feel the enemy."

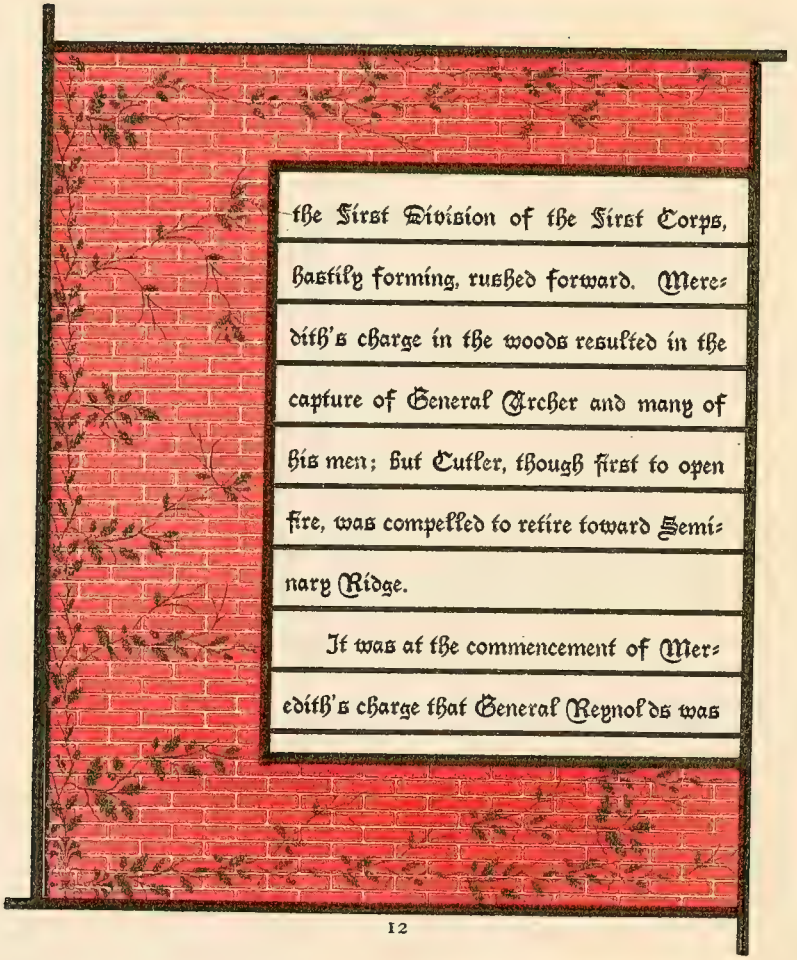
The reports of the First Cavalry Division intimate that it was "about eight o'clock" that morning when they found the enemy some three miles west of Gettysburg, and advancing on the town. Buford says "between eight and nine." They met the advance of Heth's Confederate Divis-





ion, and the battle then and there began. It was a very unequal struggle, two small cavalry brigades against a Confederate infantry division, but Buford held on until Reynolds appeared, followed by Wadsworth's Division, which seems of opinion that it arrived at about ten o'clock.

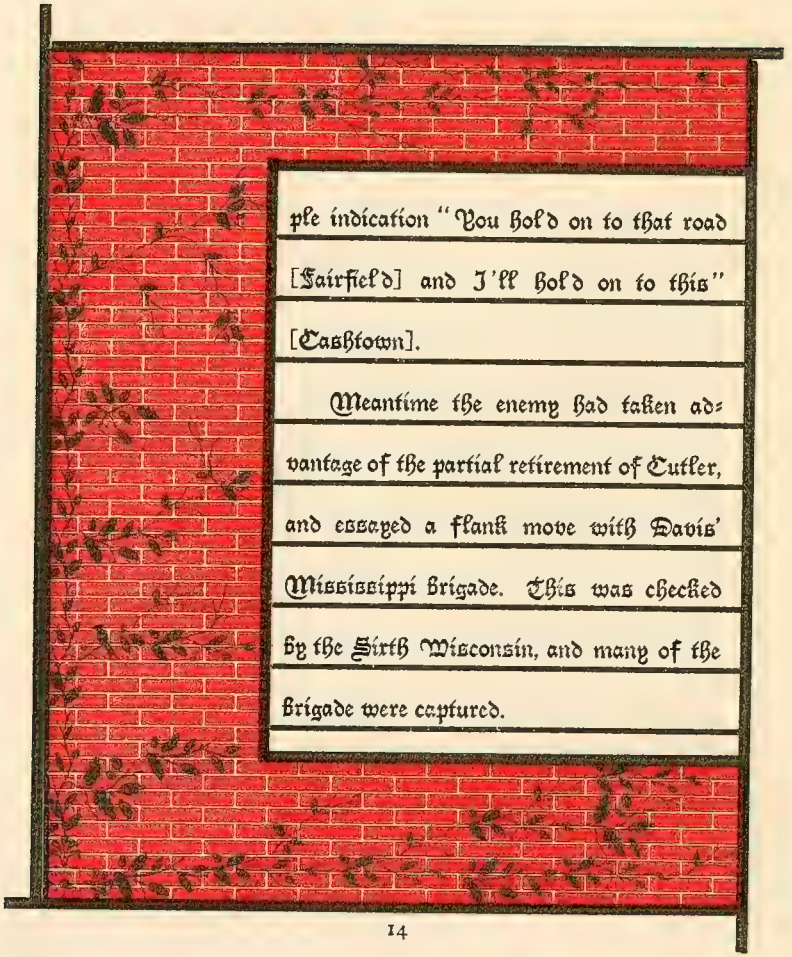
The Confederates had crossed Willoughby Run when the two brigades of



the First Division of the First Corps, hastily forming, rushed forward. Meredith's charge in the woods resulted in the capture of General Archer and many of his men; but Cutler, though first to open fire, was compelled to retire toward Seminary Ridge.

It was at the commencement of Meredith's charge that General Reynolds was

killed, and the command, with all its re-
sponsibilities, passed to General Double-
day. Plan of battle there seems to have
been none; before reaching the field Rey-
nolds and Wadsworth held a hurried
consultation in the town as to whether to
fight there behind barricades, or advance
beyond the Seminary. On the field all
the order Doubleday received was the sim-

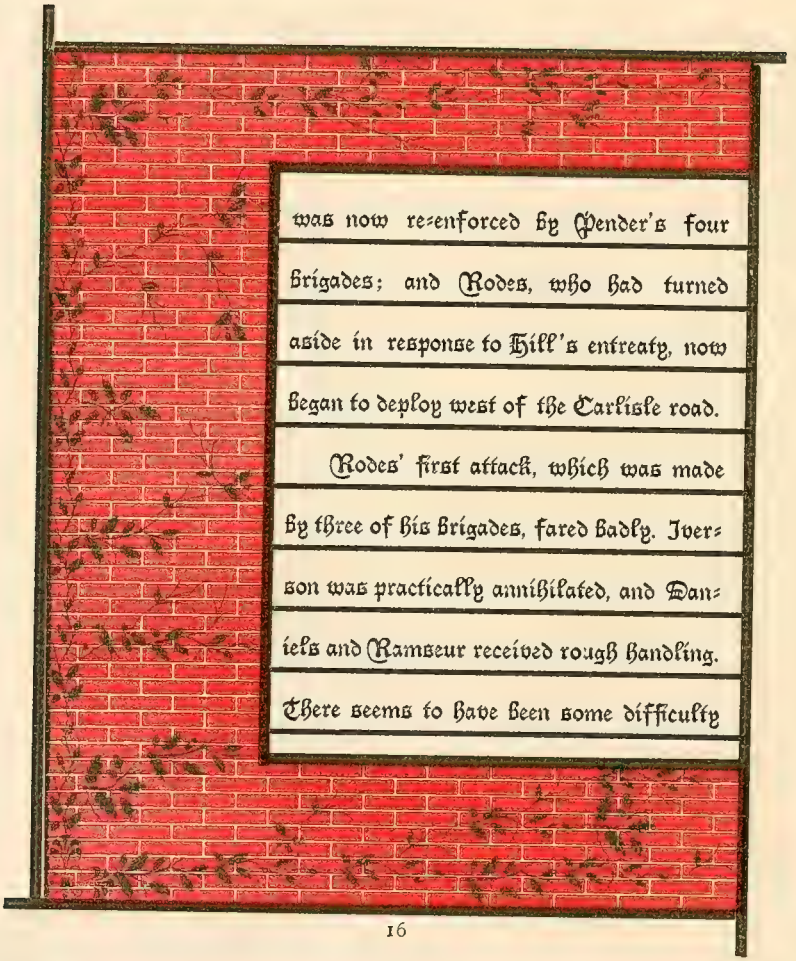


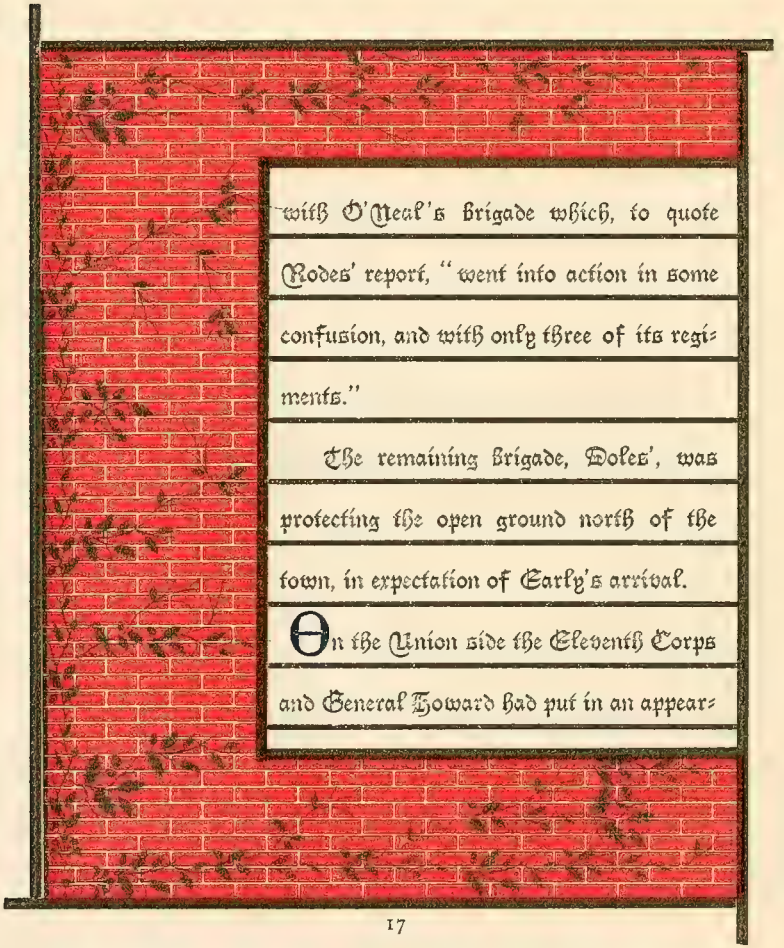
ple indication "You hold on to that road [Fairfield] and I'll hold on to this" [Cashtown].

Meantime the enemy had taken advantage of the partial retirement of Cutler, and essayed a flank move with Davis' Mississippi brigade. This was checked by the Sixth Wisconsin, and many of the brigade were captured.

Cutler re-established his line; the Third Division came on the ground and took position south of the Chambersburg road; Robinson's Division, also arriving, halted at the Seminary, but soon after moved north and occupied as far as the Mummasburg road.

Heth's Division, which had thus far borne the battle on the Confederate side,

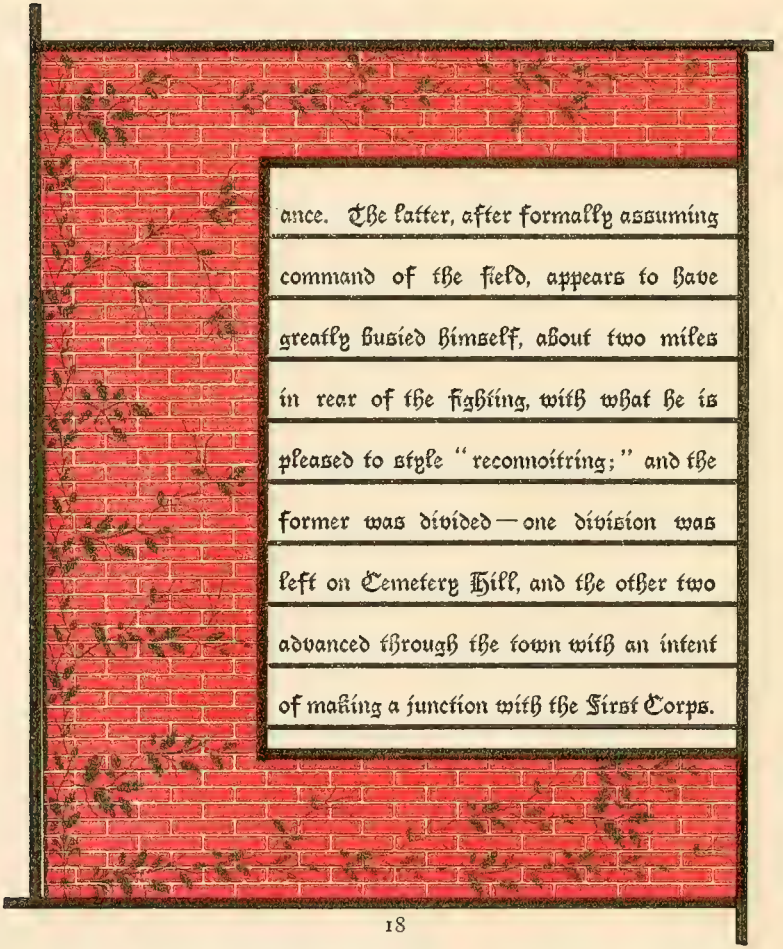

was now re-enforced by Pender's four
brigades; and Rodes, who had turned
aside in response to Hill's entreaty, now
began to deploy west of the Carlisle road.
Rodes' first attack, which was made
by three of his brigades, fared badly. Iver-
son was practically annihilated, and Dan-
iels and Ramseur received rough handling.
There seems to have been some difficulty



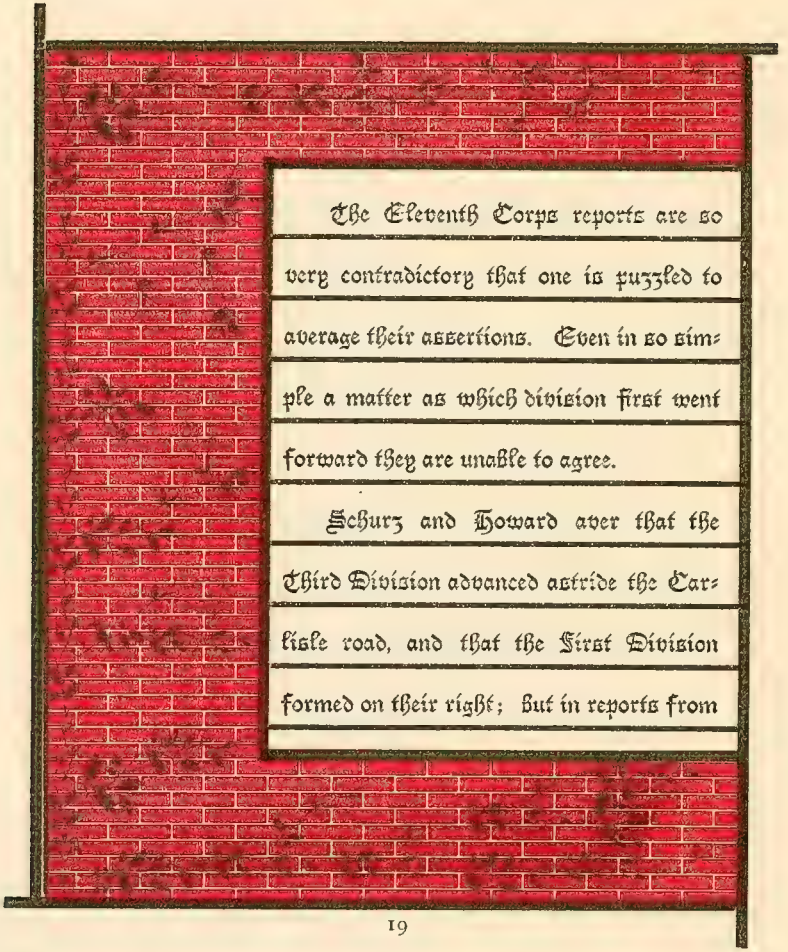
with O'Neal's brigade which, to quote Rodes' report, "went into action in some confusion, and with only three of its regiments."

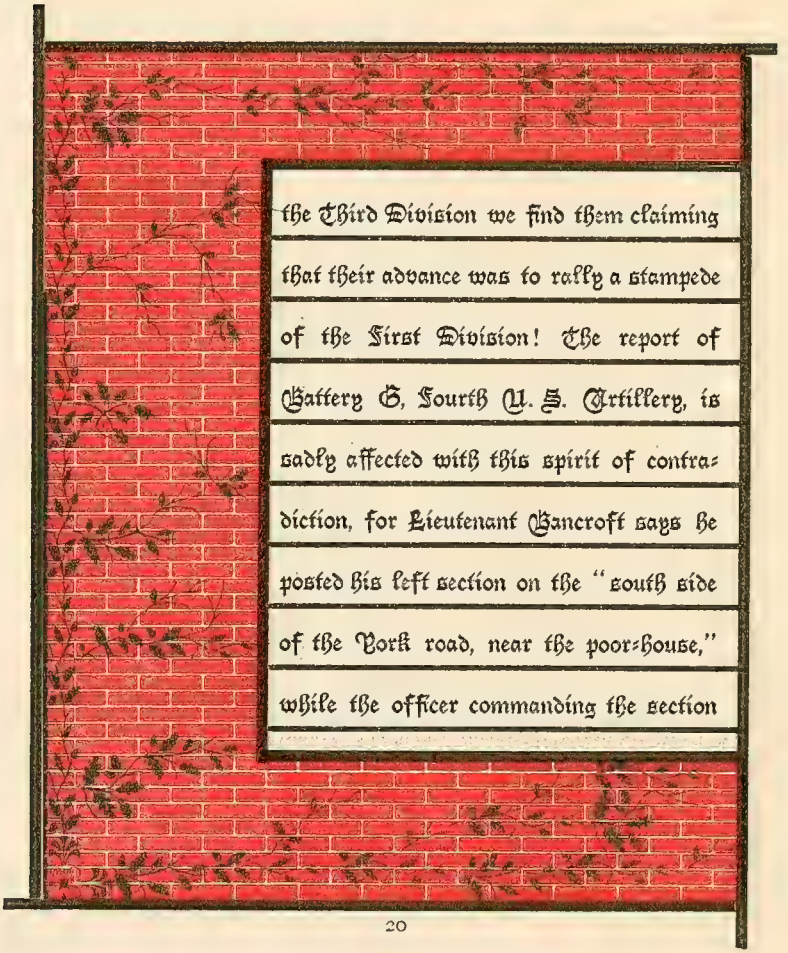
The remaining brigade, Doles', was protecting the open ground north of the town, in expectation of Early's arrival.

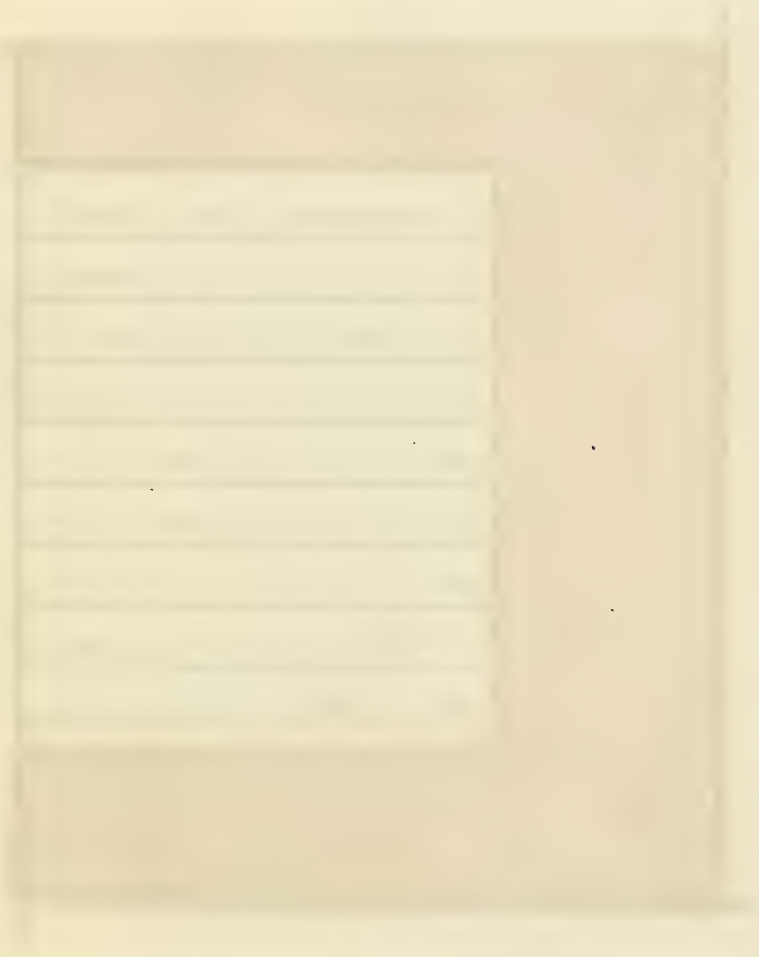
On the Union side the Eleventh Corps and General Howard had put in an appear-



ance. The latter, after formally assuming command of the field, appears to have greatly busied himself, about two miles in rear of the fighting, with what he is pleased to style "reconnoitring;" and the former was divided — one division was left on Cemetery Hill, and the other two advanced through the town with an intent of making a junction with the First Corps.


The Eleventh Corps reports are so
very contradictory that one is puzzled to
average their assertions. Even in so sim=
ple a matter as which division first went
forward they are unable to agree.
Schurz and Howard aver that the
Third Division advanced astride the Car=
lisle road, and that the First Division
formed on their right; but in reports from

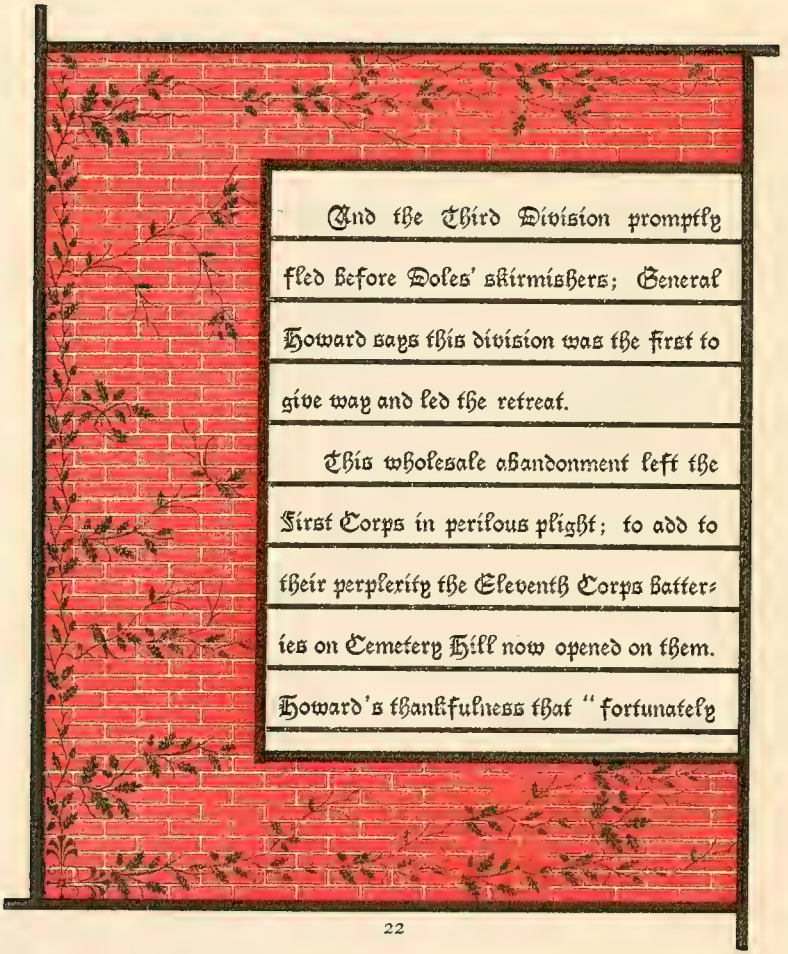

the Third Division we find them claiming
that their advance was to rally a stampede
of the First Division! The report of
Battery G, Fourth U. S. Artillery, is
sadly affected with this spirit of contra-
diction, for Lieutenant Bancroft says he
posted his left section on the "south side
of the York road, near the poor-house,"
while the officer commanding the section



assures us he was a mile northwest of that building. Neither position is recognized on the official map.

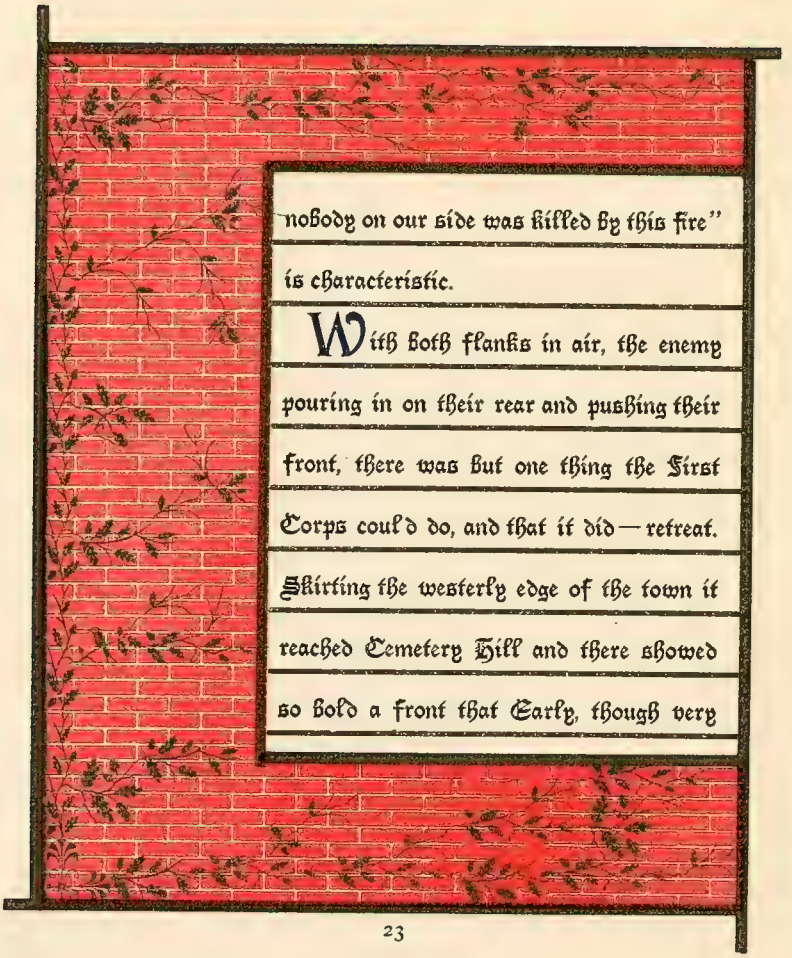
Be this as it may, they all agree in one item — each avers the other ran.

Schurz admits that his First Division "could not be rallied," a hasty interview with part of Early's troops seems to have proved too much for the red crescent.



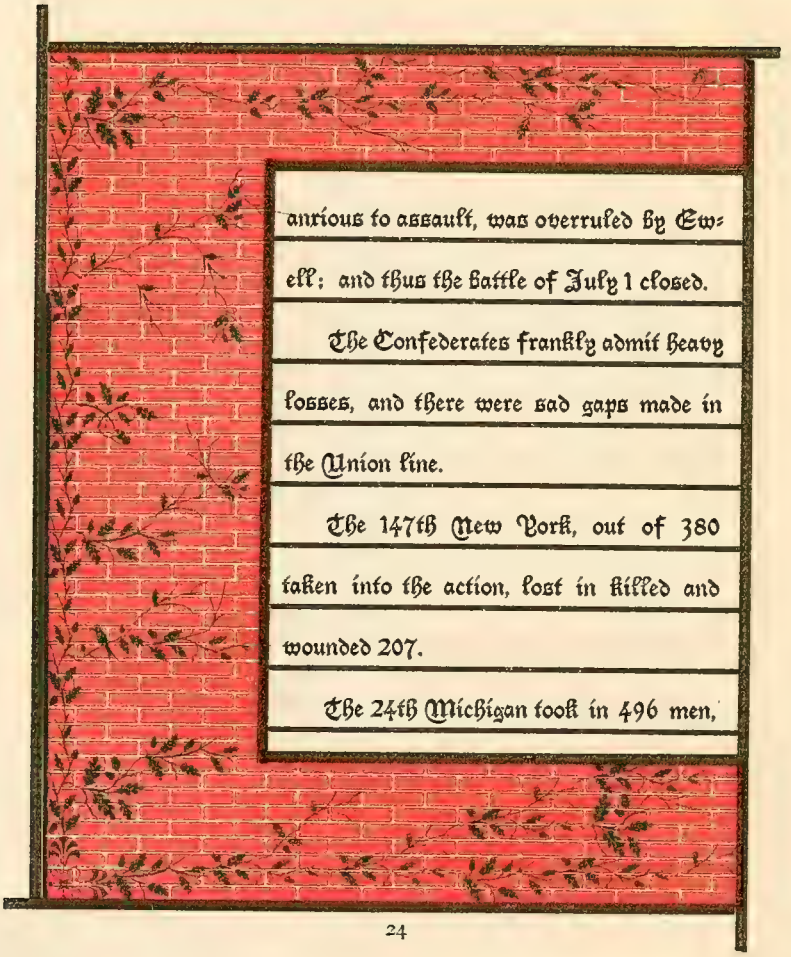
And the Third Division promptly fled before Doles' skirmishers; General Howard says this division was the first to give way and led the retreat.

This wholesale abandonment left the First Corps in perilous plight; to add to their perplexity the Eleventh Corps batteries on Cemetery Hill now opened on them. Howard's thankfulness that "fortunately



nobody on our side was killed by this fire"
is characteristic.

With both flanks in air, the enemy
pouring in on their rear and pushing their
front, there was but one thing the First
Corps could do, and that it did — retreat.
Skirting the westerly edge of the town it
reached Cemetery Hill and there showed
so bold a front that Early, though very

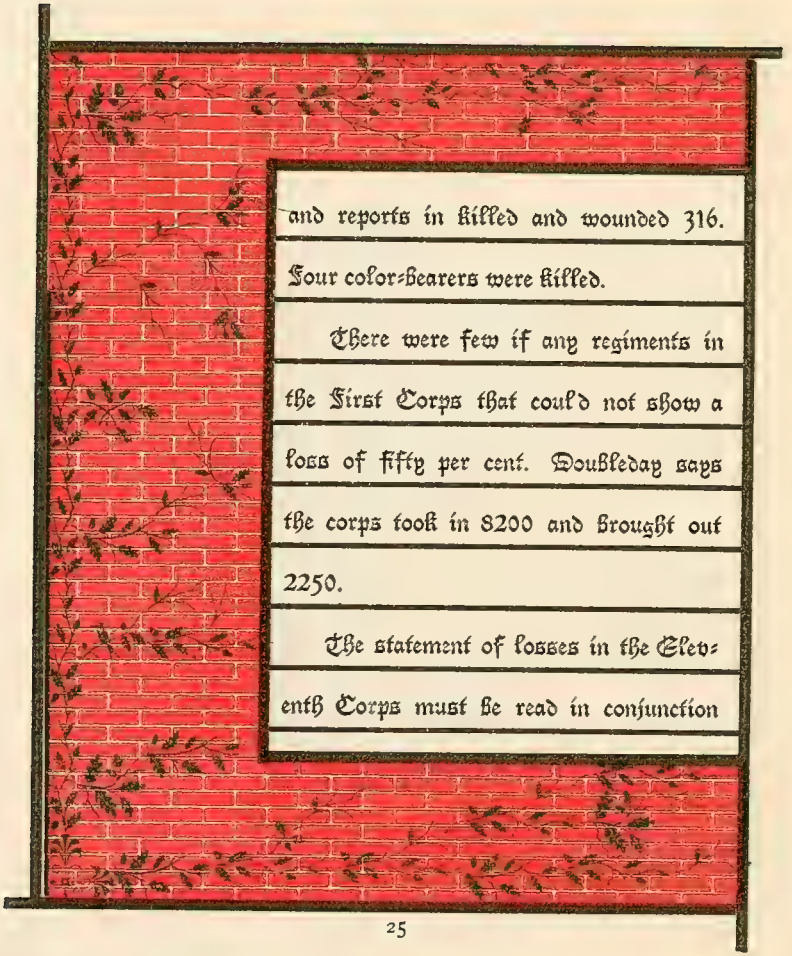


anrious to assault, was overruled by Ew-
ell; and thus the battle of July 1 closed.

The Confederates frankly admit heavy
losses, and there were sad gaps made in
the Union line.

The 147th New York, out of 380
taken into the action, lost in killed and
wounded 207.

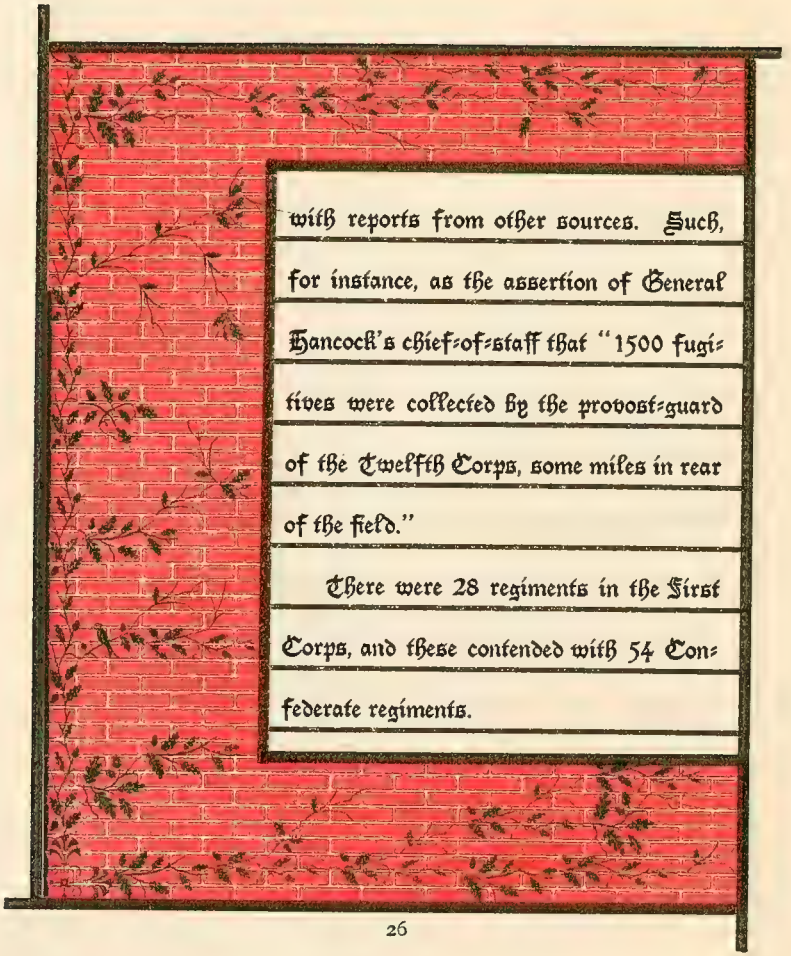
The 24th Michigan took in 496 men,



and reports in killed and wounded 316.
Four color-bearers were killed.

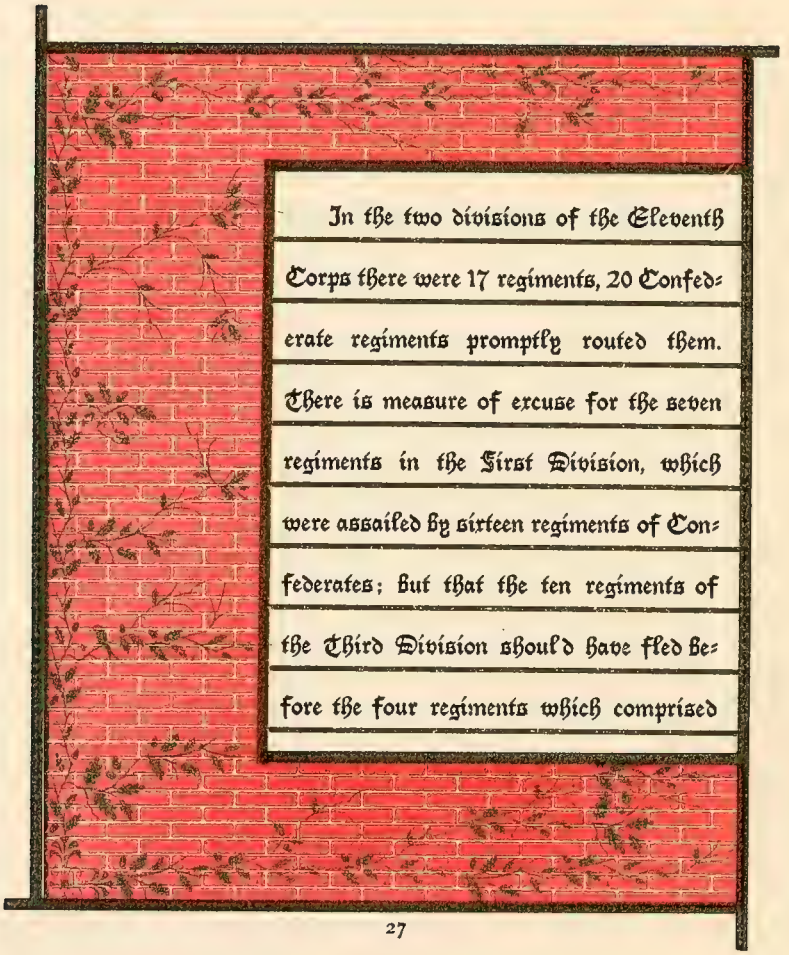
There were few if any regiments in the First Corps that coul'd not show a loss of fifty per cent. Doubleday says the corps took in 8200 and brought out 2250.

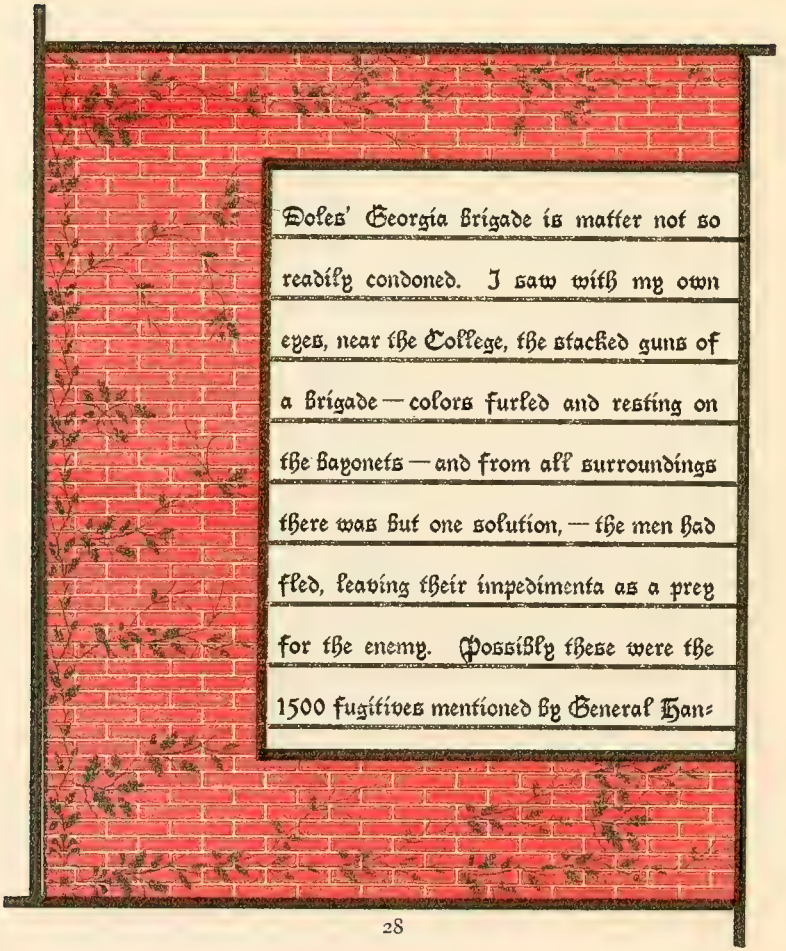
The statement of losses in the Eleventh Corps must be read in conjunction

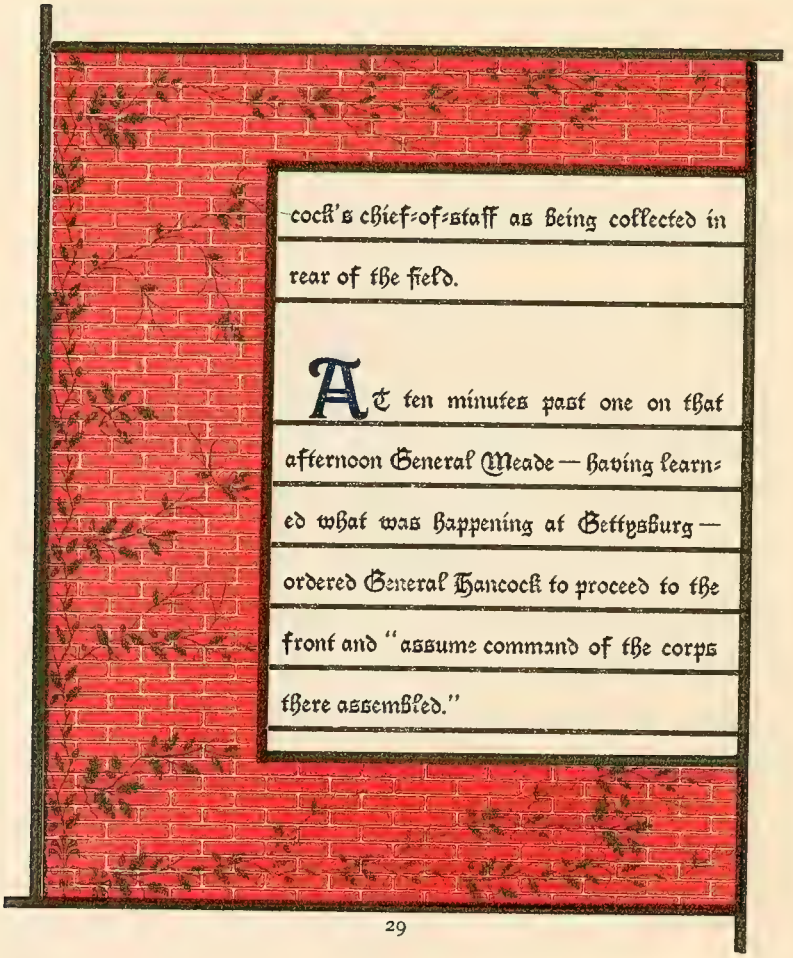


with reports from other sources. Such, for instance, as the assertion of General Hancock's chief-of-staff that "1500 fugitives were collected by the provost-guard of the Twelfth Corps, some miles in rear of the field."

There were 28 regiments in the First Corps, and these contended with 54 Confederate regiments.

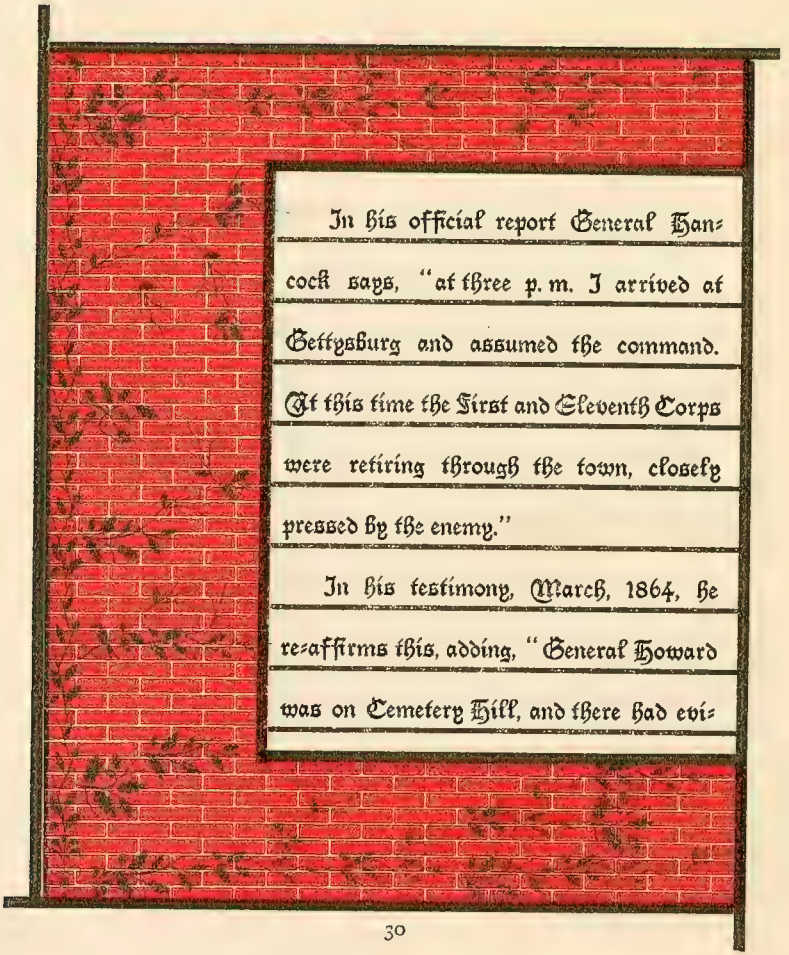

In the two divisions of the Eleventh
Corps there were 17 regiments, 20 Confed-
erate regiments promptly routed them.
There is measure of excuse for the seven
regiments in the First Division, which
were assailed by sixteen regiments of Con-
federates; but that the ten regiments of
the Third Division should have fled be-
fore the four regiments which comprised


Doles' Georgia brigade is matter not so
readily condoned. I saw with my own
eyes, near the College, the stacked guns of
a brigade — colors furled and resting on
the bayonets — and from all surroundings
there was but one solution, — the men had
fled, leaving their impedimenta as a prey
for the enemy. Possibly these were the
1500 fugitives mentioned by General Han-



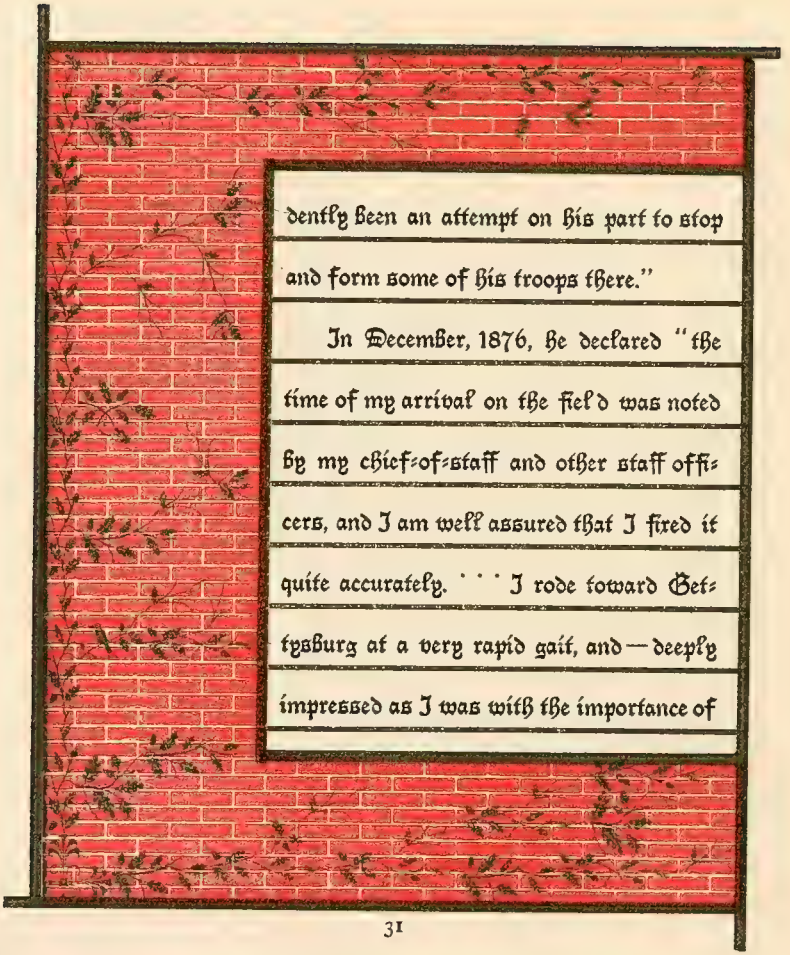
cock's chief-of-staff as being collected in rear of the field.

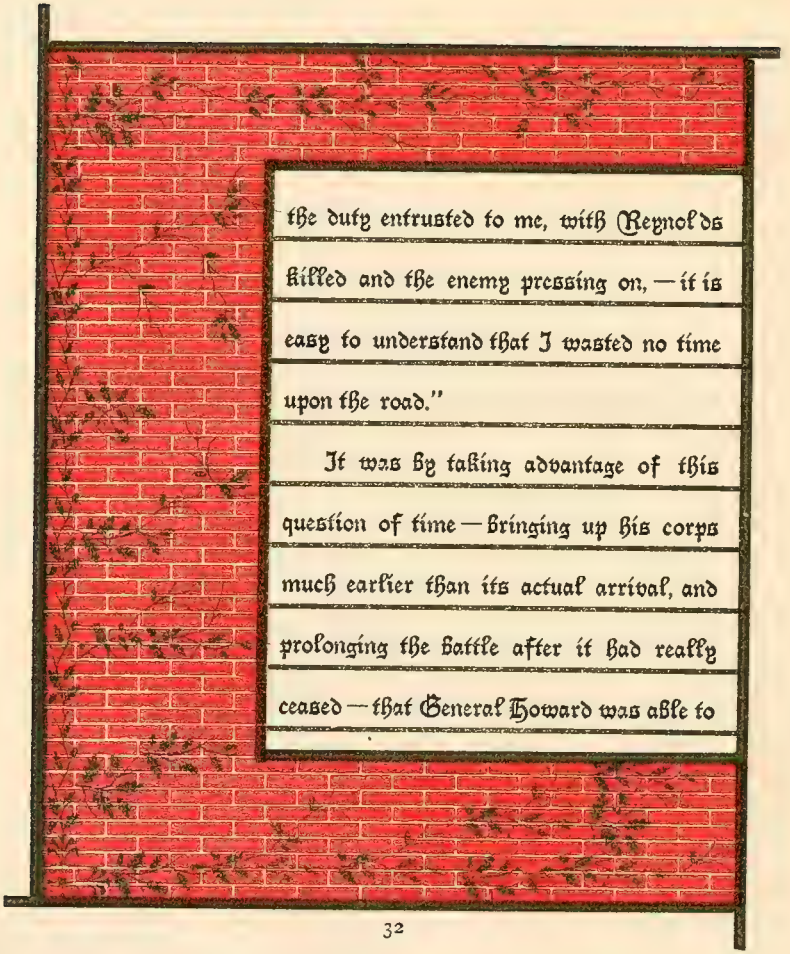
At ten minutes past one on that afternoon General Meade — having learned what was happening at Gettysburg — ordered General Hancock to proceed to the front and "assume command of the corps there assembled."



In his official report General Hancock says, "at three p. m. I arrived at Gettysburg and assumed the command. At this time the First and Eleventh Corps were retiring through the town, closely pressed by the enemy."

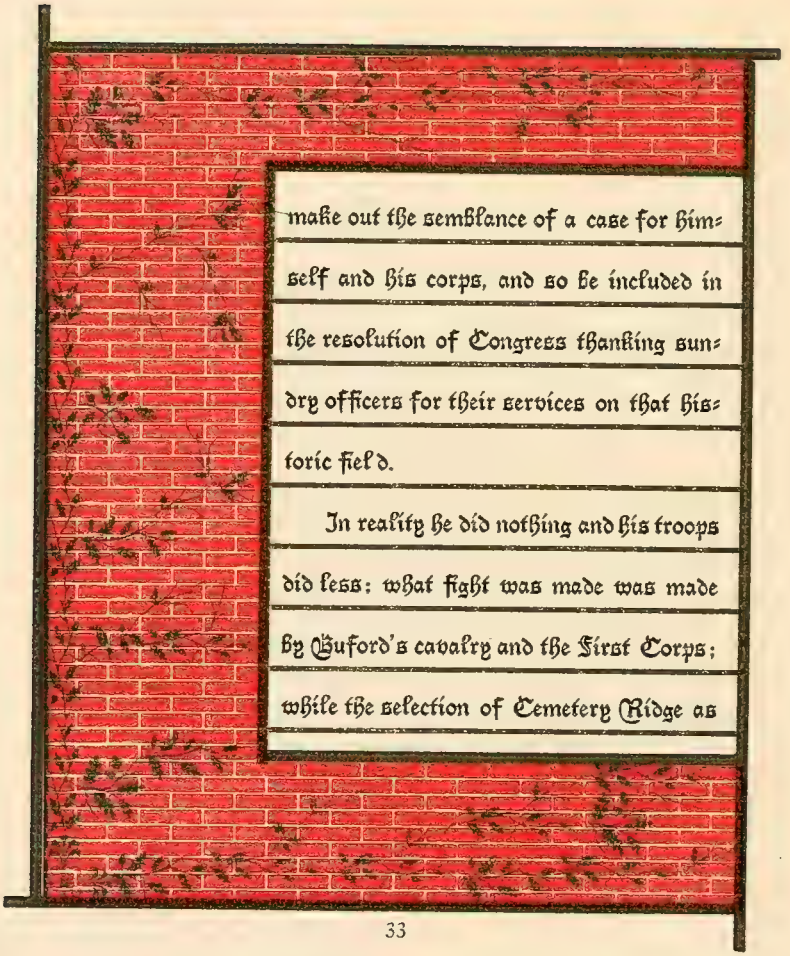
In his testimony, March, 1864, he re-affirms this, adding, "General Howard was on Cemetery Hill, and there had evi-

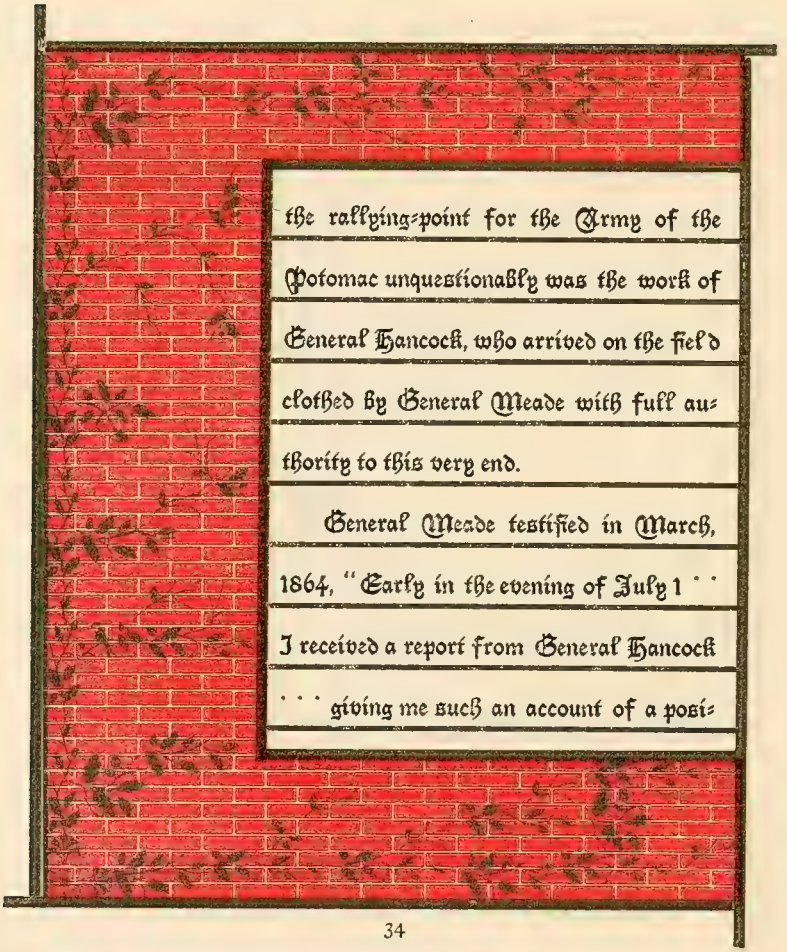

dently been an attempt on his part to stop
and form some of his troops there."
In December, 1876, he declared "the
time of my arrival on the field was noted
by my chief-of-staff and other staff offi-
cers, and I am well assured that I fired it
quite accurately. . . . I rode toward Get-
tysburg at a very rapid gait, and — deeply
impressed as I was with the importance of

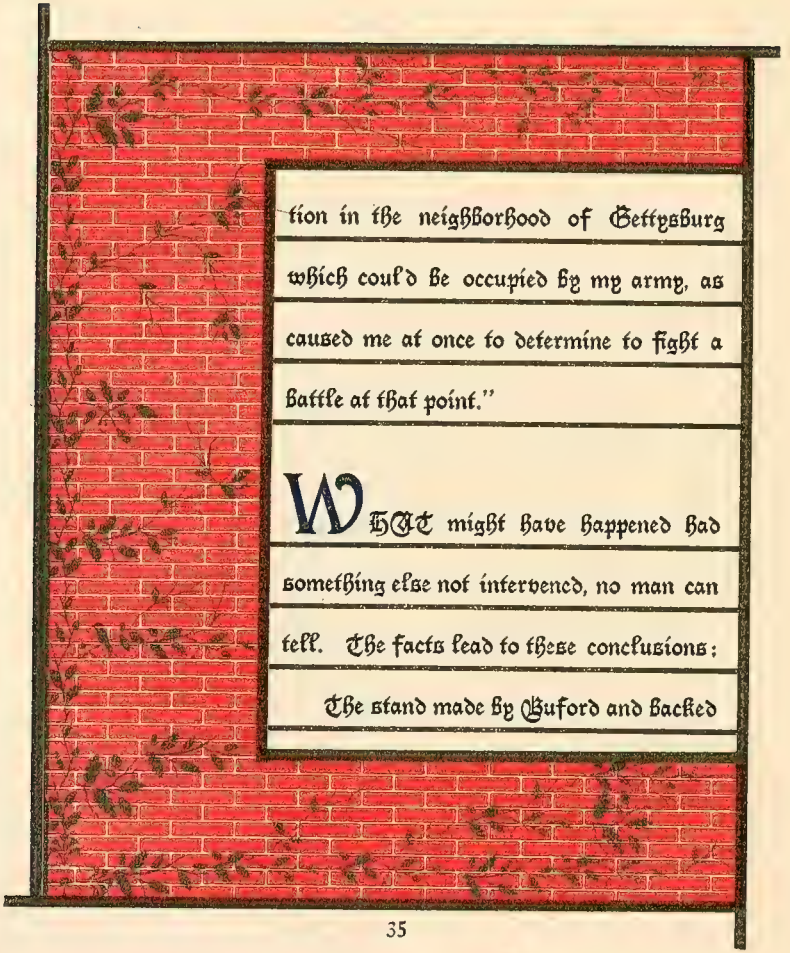


the duty entrusted to me, with Reynolds killed and the enemy pressing on, — it is easy to understand that I wasted no time upon the road."

It was by taking advantage of this question of time — bringing up his corps much earlier than its actual arrival, and prolonging the battle after it had really ceased — that General Howard was able to


make out the semblance of a case for him-
self and his corps, and so be included in
the resolution of Congress thanking sun-
dry officers for their services on that his-
toric field.
In reality he did nothing and his troops
did less: what fight was made was made
by Buford's cavalry and the First Corps;
while the selection of Cemetery Ridge as

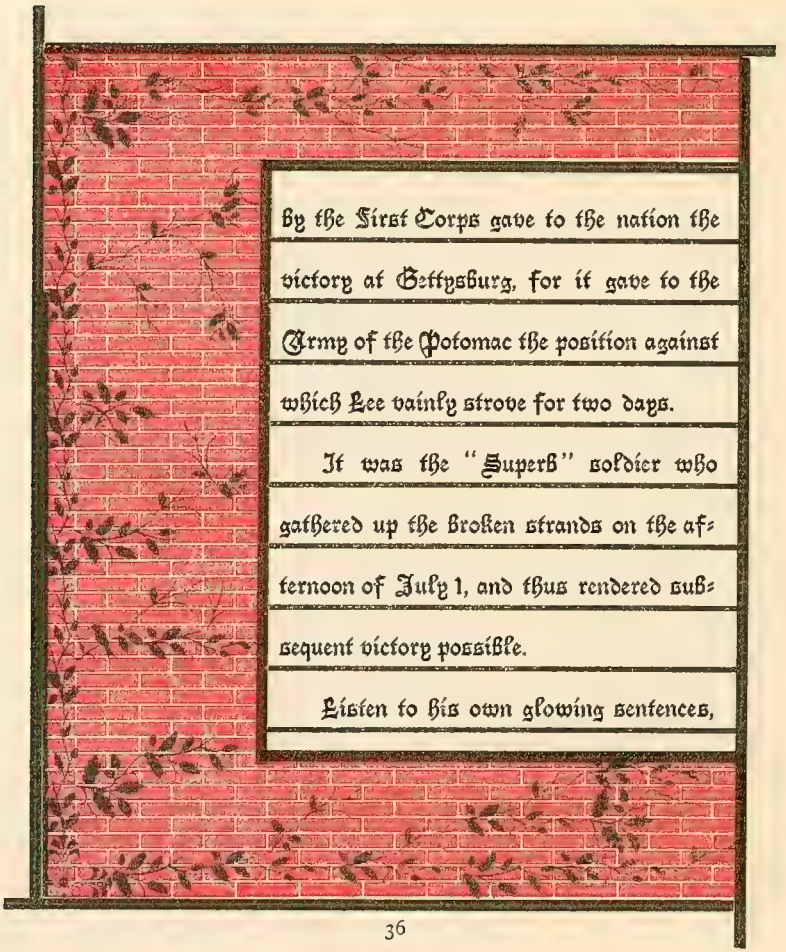

the rallying-point for the Army of the
Potomac unquestionably was the work of
General Hancock, who arrived on the field
clothed by General Meade with full au-
thority to this very end.
General Meade testified in March,
1864, "Early in the evening of July 1 . .
I received a report from General Hancock
. . . giving me such an account of a posi-



tion in the neighborhood of Gettysburg which could be occupied by my army, as caused me at once to determine to fight a battle at that point."

WHAT might have happened had something else not intervened, no man can tell. The facts lead to these conclusions:

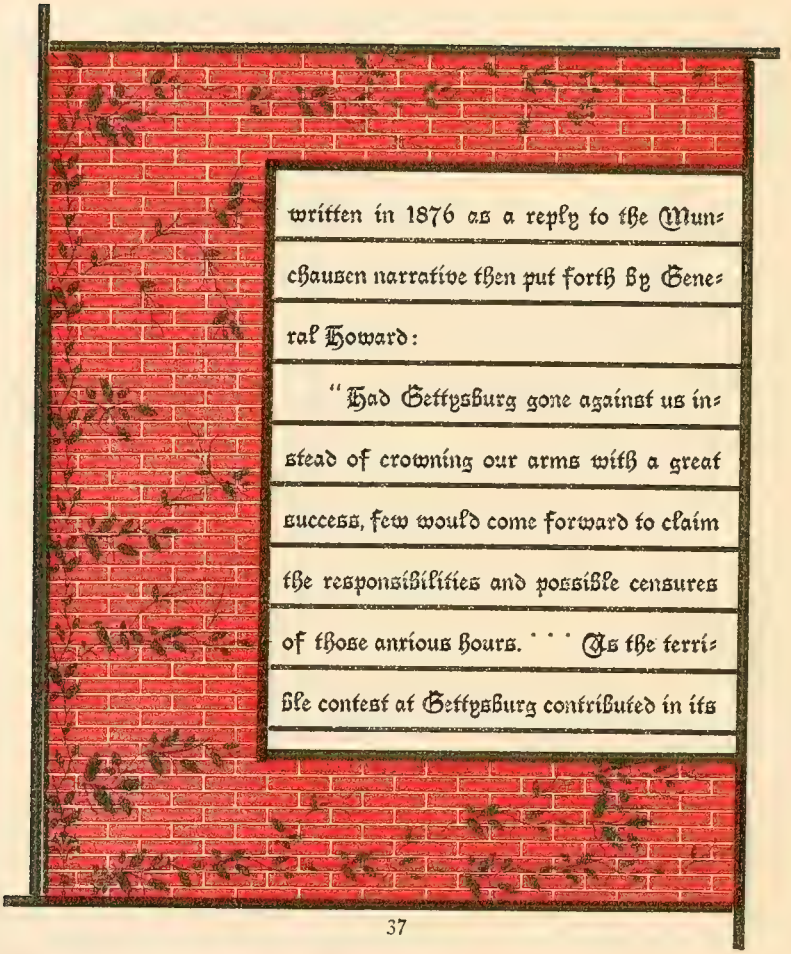
The stand made by Buford and backed

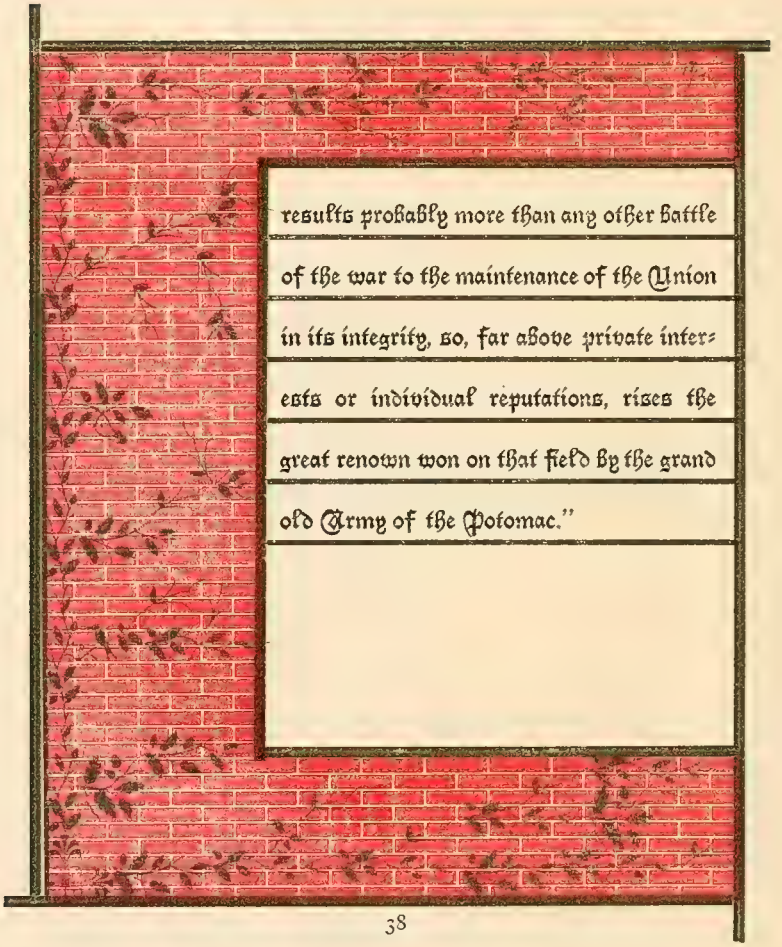


by the First Corps gave to the nation the victory at Gettysburg, for it gave to the Army of the Potomac the position against which Lee vainly strove for two days.

It was the "Superb" soldier who gathered up the broken strands on the afternoon of July 1, and thus rendered subsequent victory possible.

Listen to his own glowing sentences,


written in 1876 as a reply to the Mun-
chausen narrative then put forth by Gene-
ral Howard:
"Had Gettysburg gone against us in-
stead of crowning our arms with a great
success, few would come forward to claim
the responsibilities and possible censures
of those anxious hours. . . . As the terri-
ble contest at Gettysburg contributed in its


results probably more than any other battle
of the war to the maintenance of the Union
in its integrity, so, far above private inter-
ests or individual reputations, rises the
great renown won on that field by the grand
old Army of the Potomac."

Fifty Copies Privately Printed

JAMES BEALE, Printer, 719 Sansom Street, Philadelphia.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 013 701 991 7